

Below, read U.S. District Court Justice William Young's powerful statement against terrorism as he sentenced Richard Reid to life in prison. Reid attempted to blow up a passenger airplane with a bomb in his shoe.

United States District Court District of Massachusetts

United States of America
V.
Richard Colvin Reid

Date of Judgment: January 30, 2003

THE COURT: Mr. Richard C. Reid, hearken now to the sentence the Court imposes upon you.

On Counts 1, 5 and 6 the Court sentences you to life in prison in the custody of the United States Attorney General. On Counts 2, 3, 4 and 7, the Court sentences you to 20 years in prison on each count, the sentence on each count to run consecutive one with the other. That's 80 years.

On Count 8 the Court sentences you to the mandatory 30 years consecutive to the 80 years just imposed.

The Court imposes upon you on each of the eight counts a fine of \$250,000 for the aggregate fine of \$2 million.

The Court accepts the government's recommendation with respect to restitution and orders restitution in the amount of \$298.17 to Andre Bousquet and \$5,784 to American Airlines.

The Court imposes upon you the \$800 special assessment.

The Court imposes upon you five years supervised release simply because the law requires it. But the life sentences are real life sentences so I need not go any further.

This is the sentence that is provided for by our statutes. It is a fair and a just sentence. It is a righteous sentence. Let me explain this to you.

We are not afraid of any of your terrorist co-conspirators, Mr. Reid. We are Americans. We have been through the fire before. There is all too much war talk here. And I say that to everyone with the utmost respect.

Here in this court where we deal with individuals as individuals, and care for individuals as individuals, as human beings we reach out for justice.

You are not an enemy combatant. You are a terrorist. You are not a soldier in any war. You are a terrorist. To give you that reference, to call you a soldier gives you far too much stature. Whether it is the officers of government who do it or your attorney who does it, or that happens to be your view, you are a terrorist. And we do not negotiate with terrorists. We do not treat with terrorists. We do not sign documents with terrorists. We hunt them down one by one and bring them to justice.

So war talk is way out of line in this court. You're a big fellow. But you're not that big. You're no warrior. I know warriors. You are a terrorist. A species of criminal guilty of multiple attempted murders.

In a very real sense Trooper Santiago had it right when first you were taken off that plane and into custody and you wondered where the press and where the TV crews were and you said you're no big deal. You're no big deal.

What your counsel, what your able counsel and what the equally able United States Attorneys have grappled with and what I have as honestly as I know how tried to grapple with, is why you did something so horrific. What was it that led you here to this courtroom today. I have listened respectfully to what you have to say. And I ask you to search your heart and ask yourself what sort of unfathomable hate led you to do what you are guilty and admit you are guilty of doing.

And I have an answer for you. It may not satisfy you. But as I search this entire record it comes as close to understanding as I know.

It seems to me you hate the one thing that to us is most precious. You hate our freedom. Our individual freedom. Our individual freedom to live as we choose, to come and go as we



Justice Young sentencing Richard Reid, the "shoe bomb" terrorist.

choose, to believe or not believe as we individually choose.

Here, in this society, the very winds carry freedom. They carry it everywhere from sea to shining sea. It is because we prize individual freedom so much that you are here in this beautiful courtroom. So that everyone can see, truly see that justice is administered fairly, individually, and discretely.

It is for freedom's sake that your lawyers are striving so vigorously on your behalf and have filed appeals, will go on in their, their representation of you before other judges. We care about it. Because we all know that the way we treat you, Mr. Reid, is the measure of our own liberties.

Make no mistake though. It is yet true that we will bear any burden, pay any price, to preserve our freedoms.

Look around this courtroom. Mark it well. The world is not going to long remember what you or I say here. Day after tomorrow it will be forgotten. But this, however, will long endure. Here, in this courtroom, and courtrooms all across America, the American people will gather to see that justice, individual justice, justice, not war, individual justice is in fact being done.

The very President of the United States through his officers will have to come into courtrooms and lay out evidence on which specific matters can be judged, and juries of citizens will gather to sit and judge that evidence democratically, to mold and shape and refine our sense of justice.

See that flag, Mr. Reid? That's the flag of the United States of America. That flag will fly there long after this is all forgotten. That flag still stands for freedom. You know it always will.

Custody, Mr. Officer. Stand him down.

MR. REID: That flag will be brought down on the day of judgment and you will see in front of your Lord and my Lord and then we will know.

(Whereupon Mr. Reid was removed from the courtroom.)

THE COURT: We'll recess.

THE CLERK: All rise.

(Whereupon the matter concluded.)



The Honorable
William G. Young;
Chief Judge, U.S.
District Court



Richard Reid;
sentenced to life after
trying to blow up a
jetliner with explosives
he had hidden in his
shoes.